3:Stanmus D-5 (ca. 1912) 1922 FT7 Yao FT7

Again, charm medicine may be contained in various articles which are also generally worn round the neck. The teeth and claws of the beasts of prey are so employed, generally arranged in pairs bound together so as to form a crescent and suspended from a string. The teeth of crocodiles, lions, leopards, and the claws of the same beasts and of some large birds of prey are thus employed. The teeth etc., are in themselves charms against injury, probably against what one might call homologous injury. The idea of stuffing them with medicine is probably a secondary consideration, a process of fortification of the charm so that its use comes to have a more powerful influence. It is interesting to see of late years that the native, recognising the decorative value of these crescent-shaped amulets, has begun to copy them in lead and ivory. A series of these of graduated size is worn as a necklace by women.

When a medicine-man is consulted, part payment is made in advance, "payment to go and dig medicine (roots)." The rest of the payment is made when the cure is effected. Should a patient not be satisfied with his treatment and wish to consult some other medicine-man, he pays to the first a quarter of the fee he would have paid if his cure had been effected; this is called "paying him to get his medicine away." Unless this is done, should he recover later, he will be liable to claims for full fees from all of the medicine-men he has consulted; each will say his own medicine has gone on acting and has effected the cure. A medicine-man may take a case he is treating into his own house.

In prescribing medicine, very particular instructions are given with an embargo on certain things which may or may not have some use and significance. A medicine-man in 1891 at Malenya's, who inoculated every one in the forehead with bullet proof medicine, said that no one must step across a *mwiri* (pestle for pounding grain), and no one must eat the leaves of the sweet potato.

A medicine-man always partakes of part of the decoction he is giving to a patient to show that it is harmless; I think these preparations are mostly inactive. I should hate to sample all the castor oil I have prescribed, though many natives have had suspicions about me when I have not done so.

Poisons. Though there are a large number of species in this country, both vegetable and animal, from which poison might be extracted, those that have gained any reputation among natives and have come under my observation are but few in number. *Mwavi* (*Mwabvi* Chin.) "the ordeal poison," is the bark of *Erythrophloeum guineense*. The natives distinguish two varieties of *mwavi*, the two trees differing slightly in leaf, flower and bark; *mwavi* is the *Erythrophloeum guineense*, the second variety known as *mpanyiko* is doubtless an allied species. *Mwavi* is the poison employed in the poison ordeal.[1] It is administered in a poisonous dose as a decoction of the bark, recovery or otherwise depending on whether or not the poison is voided by vomiting. Natives give as the symptoms headache, giddiness, disturbances of vision, vomiting and purging, with slowing of heart beat. *Mpan-*

[1] Vide infra, p. 298.

3:Stanman D-8 (ca. 1912) 1922 FT7 Yao FT7

137 ●278 *mpilo* is a more deadly poison and is not used in the poison ordeal but is administered with intent to murder; it is usually given mixed with beer or in porridge. Death is said to be assured in a few hours. *Lipembele:* the Yao name of beetles belonging to the genus *Mylabris*, found in large numbers in June and July in the native gardens where they do much 136 damage to the bean crops. The name is, I think, more especially applied to a species with 278 yellow bands, those with red markings being said to be harmless. These beetles are prepared for poisoning food by frying and then grinding into a powder. In this form, they are administered with intent to murder or they may be taken for suicidal purposes, five or six beetles being used. These beetles contain cantharidin in a greater proportion than cantharis itself. The symptoms described by the natives as occurring after exhibition are constipation followed by high fever, and death eight hours later. This same beetle is known to other tribes and is the *nsenene* of the Anyanja.

The bile of the crocodile, *nyongo* (*ndulu*, Chin.); *nyongo* and *ndulu* also are used, meaning the gall-bladder. Crocodile gall has the reputation of being a powerful poison over nearly the length and breadth of Africa. It is known, I think, to all the tribes in Nyasaland. In this district, they qualify their beliefs by saying that the bile of crocodiles from Lakes Chilwa and Chiuta which do not eat men is not poisonous. The poison is also said not to be used on the Lower Shiré River where, and where only, crocodiles are eaten as food by the natives. Among the Yao, the gall-bladder is removed with the contained gall, dried, and then ground in a little mortar or on a stone. The dose of the powder is said to be as much as would cover a sixpence. Symptoms are said to be great pain in the stomach, swelling and discoloration of the tongue, and loss of speech. Public destruction of [271] the gall-bladder of any crocodile which has been killed is said to be the custom on the West Coast of Africa, and the same is true of some tribes in Nyasaland as at Kotakota, but so far as I am aware, this is not done among the Yao.

The gall of other animals is similarly used, but among the Yao I am not quite certain of the species. *Lipiri*, the puff-adder, certainly is utilized, and I think other snakes, such as *Nahukukuti*, a grey, ash coloured snake, *Lisopi*, a water-snake six feet long, and *Soupa*, the arrowing-snake. Certain lizards are also employed, such as *Likwakwala*, and frogs, both *Chisolo* and the running frog, *Chimwemwe*. Scorpions too have found a place among poisonous preparations, as it is said, and likewise, the bile of some mammals. Bamboo fibre, animal hair, the bones of fish, and ground glass, I have also heard mentioned as being administered with the desire to produce a fatal enteritis.

Pupai cases made of twigs and the contained pupæ (species of the family of *Psychidæ*) called *chikwangu* or *chikwa nguri* (fr[illegible]-*kwa*, "to eat" and *nguri*, "fire-wood") are said when eaten by cattle to cause dea[illegible] I cannot vouch for the truth of this nor can I say whether they are ever given to man.

137 A wild yam, *mbwa* (*mwinga*, Chin.) is poisonous if not well boiled and the water thrown 278 away, but is not used as a poison so far as I know. The same is true of *nyungu*, a kind of cassava.

3:Stannus D-5 (ca. 1912) 1922 FT7 Yao FT7

Strophanthus is specially reserved for poisoning arrows and it is doubtful if it is ever given by mouth; *Kombe* is the name used in this country, but there are two species of *strophanthus* in Nyasaland, *Strophanthus kombe* and *Strophanthus courmonti*. The seeds and bark are used and, less commonly, the root. They are mixed with the roots of a shrub called *Nchauimbe*, pounded together and boiled, and the liquid used to anoint the arrows. The use of poisoned arrows is a Manyanja custom adopted to some extent by the Yao.

A number of poisons are also employed in catching fish, *Nyanga* and *Mtulo* being the most common, also *Kawanimbila Nguchi* (*Nkudzi*, Chin.), and *Chinguega*.

Witchcraft. In my article on the Anyanja,[1] reference is made to witchcraft and *mfiti*. Beside the Nyanja *mfiti* or the Yao *mauwi*, all tribes as far as I know in Nyasaland have firmly fixed among their beliefs, the conception of the supernatural human-flesh eater. It is a little difficult to define the term *mfiti* or *mauwi*, as it has come to have the somewhat generalised sense of one who practices witchcraft, but the original meaning is defined by Scott,[2] a person who has acquired the knowledge of occult medicine by which he can kill his fellow men; "what makes the power so dreaded is not that the *mfiti* exercises this power for reasons of spite but (as is supposed), to eat the body of his victim." It is at once interesting to note that the word *mfiti* does not belong, according to Scott, to the personal class of nouns but to the *pa-as* class, which seems to imply that they believe a *mfiti* to be something outside the idea of a person. Among the Anyanja in Zomba district, however, the word belongs to the first class of nouns (the personal class) as also does *mauwi* in Chiyao.

The natives believe that any man in a village may be a *mfiti* or it might be more correct to say, is capable of changing into a *mfiti*. *Ufiti* is the state of being a *mfiti*; in Chiyao, *mauwi*.

As I have pointed out under *Diseases*, practically all illness and death are thought to be due to the machinations of some person or persons. The inciting motive which may cause a man to compass the death of another may be spite, revenge, etc., or the desire of *mauwi*. Until recent years, when the Government legislated to put down witchcraft, the charges of *mauwi* were everyday occurrences. Whether or not the prevalence of the idea of cannibalism has any substance in correspondingly frequent practice has never been and now probably never will be surely proved. Duff Macdonald believes it to be so.[3] It is true that native graves have been and are still rifled and that the graves of some Europeans have been so opened in the past, as I have learned from eyewitnesses. It seems probable that the graves were tampered with by natives with the object of removing the human remains, possibly to be eaten or to obtain portions of the body to use as charms. Mr. L. T. Moggridge,

[1] 'Notes on some tribes of British Central Africa,' *op. cit.*, p. 202.
[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 545.
[3] *Africana*, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 313-314.